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ABSTRACT

Three hypothetical scenarios for the 1980's are presented as tools for exploring the future of the Des Moines, Iowa, Independent Community School District. Each is written in the past tense as a "history" and is followed by a set of implications for education. The first scenario conveys an optimistic view of current trends, suggesting that the eighties will be a prosperous decade characterized by the emergence of a new economic order based on information, with education as its foundation. Implications include increased diversity in educational needs, increased use of computers, and a retooling of educational objectives. The second, pessimistic scenario projects current economic problems into the future, positing a depression in the latter part of the decade. Educational implications include limited finances, teacher shortages, and increased special education enrollment. The third, "static view," scenario projects what is likely to occur if socioeconomic conditions remain largely as they are. The dominant likelihood for education will then be continuing budget restrictions. A working paper is included, consisting of 11 questions pertaining to educational planning, to be filled out in the context of each scenario. (TE)

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Three Histories of the 1980's: Implications for Education

EA 016 458

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Three Histories of the 1980's: Implications for Education

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Now if you find anything in the scenarios with which you take exception, we have spread the blame.

INTRODUCTION

This publication consists of three scenarios of the 1980's. The "histories" were constructed for use as tools to aid in exploring what the future may hold for the Des Moines Independent Community School District. What is a scenario? Herman Kahn defines it as, "a hypothetical sequence of events constructed for the purpose of focusing attention on causal processes and decision points." We might simplify Kahn's definition by stating that our scenarios are unproved, assumed theories of how the future might be, which were designed to cause the reader to think about the available options under each set of circumstances.

Futurists generally believe that there is not just one future. They speak in terms of alternative futures. In a given situation, or combination of situations, there are many alternative future directions which might occur. Those attempting to forecast the future look at the possibilities (is the event a potential occurrence?), the probabilities (is it within the realm of likelihood?), and the preferabilities (is such a thing desirable?). In the three scenarios which follow the authors have made every effort to avoid the third element insofar as their personal desires are concerned. However, as others utilize the scenarios as tools for determining the options available to the Des Moines Independent Community School District, they should make every attempt to look at their personal preferences. Human choice is one of several factors which determines the future. By determining ones preferences, the individual or group may then work to minimize the effects of less desirable factors and reduce their probabilities of occurring, while maximizing those courses which seem most preferable.

In developing the scenarios the authors spent many months studying, interviewing, discussing and drafting hypothetical historical accounts of the 1980s from three distinct perspectives:

1. Optimistic. From this perspective "everything's coming up roses." Many economists, demographers, techologists, natural scientists, political scientists and others see a multitude of silver linings in the future. Even those who hold, on the main, to a pessimistic outlook for the future, almost without exception have a few cheerful probabilities for the future; while many view the world primarily as very cloudy, at least some of the clouds have silver linings.
2. Pessimistic. There is no shortage of doom-sayers at the present time. Given current economic conditions, scientific warnings, conflicting political and social philosophies, international strife, eroding natural resources and the myriad other pesky problems facing the world, a great amount has been written and said regarding all the undesirable things which might befall humankind. This particular scenario certainly had no shortage of resource material.
3. Static. According to most futurists the most probable futures forecast is a continuation of present trends. This scenario of the 1980s foresees the extension of current trends on their present course and direction into 1990, and is primarily static in nature.

The scenarios confine their historical information primarily to the movements and conditions within the economy and society that affect education, but do not deal with the history of education in the 1980s per se. The authors assumed that schools and education are almost

always a reflection of the economy and the society within which they exist. Society does not serve schools, schools serve society. Schools exist to fulfill the needs of the society within which they exist. However, in order to bring the scenarios somewhat closer to the task of providing information which might "focus attention on causal processes and decision points" relative to education, each scenario is followed by a section in the report entitled, "Implications for Education." Within that section several general statements are made regarding what the authors feel would be some of the major impacts on education resulting from the conditions stated within the preceding scenario.

The reader should be aware that many events can occur which will cause traumatic changes in the economy and society. For the most part the authors have avoided any attempt to deal with this type of change since it is impossible to forecast. Such traumatic events might include war, natural disasters on a worldwide scale (polar icecap extension, for example), plagues, and the like. Natural disaster contributes somewhat to the Pessimistic scenario, but is really not a "first cause."

The authors encourage your thorough study and concentration on each of the scenarios and the accompanying educational implications. Without indepth study, the next step, that of applying the given circumstances to the Des Moines Independent Community School District, will be impossible. The kindergartners of 1990 will be the high school graduating class of 2003 and will reach age 65 in 2050.

I. THE OPTIMISTIC VIEW

Shortly after the 1980 elections, Ronald Reagan and Congress joined forces to chart a new direction for the nation. What at first appeared to be a devastating blow to education and welfare programs as a result of the reduction of federal dollars, proved to be a positive step toward state and local control. Waste and unnecessary regulations were both reduced.

Though the Reagan administration began on an uncertain economic note, with interest rates, unemployment and the consumer price index all ballooning toward a disastrous crash dive, beginning in late 1982 and into 1983, following a second tax cut, the economy began to recover. As the decade progressed, business activity began to grow steadily. The federal budget was brought back into balance after many years of deficit financing; monetary fiscal policy was neutralized to let the free market work.

There were several factors which contributed to the prosperous decade of the 1980's. Both management and labor began to emulate the Japanese system of productivity (Theory Z), while greatly increasing the use of technology. It became obvious by the mid-1980's that society had entered a "postindustrial" society. As technology became increasingly sophisticated, people adapted to the rapidity of change by becoming less concerned with material possessions and more concerned with the value of time. Commodity production, which depleted the resources of the earth, began to ease and was replaced with the increased production of services and knowledge creation. The "work ethic," which had been in demise for over a decade, found a new standard in the rise of a "craftsmanship ethic." This movement was far from being widespread; however, by 1990 both the nation and the world were moving in that direction.

Between 1980-85 people began to interact extensively with computers: on jobs, at home, in their cars, and for recreation; but only moderately in the public schools. The transformation to the computer in education started slowly during the 1980s but gained full momentum by mid-decade. The need for computer literacy was intensified by the beginning of the "information" society. Agriculture and manufacturing no longer constituted the foundation of the economy. A new economic order began to emerge--one based not on material goods and energy, but on information, with education as its foundation.

The trend away from the agricultural and industrial base, a result of events during the preceding two decades, was reflected in the reduced demands for workers in those areas of the labor market. Economically, politically, and socially the importance of manufacturing eased rather quickly. Production of goods was replaced by production of knowledge. The information industry included a vast range of endeavors: printing and publishing, communications and telecommunications, the use of communications by the knowledge professions, and the establishment of companies engaged in research, manufacturing and distribution of communications equipment--from computers to robots.

Labor unions gradually began to compromise salary increases for job security and more free time for their members. Productivity was enhanced by having the workers refreshed, more highly motivated, and more concerned about the welfare of their companies. With the rising craftsmanship ethic, the workers began to create higher quality products, services, and knowledge than were produced during the 1960s and 1970s.

The valuing of time, craftsmanship, and quality was in harmony with the rising movement toward conservation and the wiser use of energy sources. By 1990 a conspicuous slowing of mass consumption patterns

was being replaced with a more sane sense of sufficiency. The combination of new technology and capital investment led to increased service and knowledge production, accompanied by "sufficient" production of goods. This reduced further danger to the environment and slowed the rate of natural resource depletion.

By the mid-1980s interest rates had receded to more acceptable levels; inflation had eased six to seven percent. Both were direct results of the slowly changing value system of the American public, and the easing of consumer pressure for more and more "things."

The strong national economy benefitted Iowa. Crops continued to be abundant and were sold on a free world market which maintained a good demand balance. The manufacturing that accompanied a strong farm economy continued to grow within the state and was bolstered by the introduction of information productivity. The last seven years of the decade showed a growth rate in Iowa that averaged four percent annually. The low two percent annual national economic growth rate of the 1970s, doubled in the 1980s, which was more in line with historic growth rates of the American economy.

Increasingly, Iowans chose to stay in Iowa to work. This positive result maintained the Iowa population. In fact, as the 1980s closed, the population of Iowa and Des Moines once again was growing. The large number of baby-boom women of childbearing age and good economic conditions were two contributing factors to this growth. Rising gasoline prices and a declining rate of crime were further positive influences on the population of Des Moines.

The 1980s witnessed some interesting governmental shifts. Reagan came to office in 1981 vowing to "get government off our backs." At that time it was a phrase without a clear-cut meaning. What resulted

was a shift of responsibility for human services programs away from the federal government to the states. The psychological effect of this "New Federalism" was to encourage local and state governments to economize, while becoming more responsive to their citizenry. A major savings was realized in Iowa when in 1985 the Legislature reorganized the 99 counties of Iowa into 37 larger and more efficient governmental units. This sweeping change freed almost 30 percent of the property taxes which were previously earmarked for the support of county governments to local governments and schools.

When the state sales tax was increased to five percent in 1983, new state monies were generated at a time when federal support for programs was being phased out. Protests about the state sales tax increase were short-lived since food, clothing and medicine were exempt from the tax. This new state income was vitally needed to offset the loss of federal support to a variety of traditional state services.

Implications for Education

1. In 1990 the Des Moines Independent Community School District was still in existence, and had the responsibility for educating the children of the district; it endured the conditions experienced by all other sectors of the nation.
2. Public finance for education was available in some form; however, public schools did not receive a marked increase in support. The economy was in an expanded period of growth, though an inordinate amount of tax money, even in these fairly prosperous years was not provided for education. School budgets were allowed to grow at or slightly above the rate of inflation.
3. A variety of perceived educational needs and conflicting desires continued to arise from the diverse publics served by the Des Moines public schools. It became increasingly expensive to serve a diverse metropolitan community. In these relatively good economic times people expected a well-balanced educational program that met many special needs. Trying to satisfy these needs became more expensive.
4. At the beginning of the 1980s schools entered a period of declining teacher supply. Colleges and universities reported that the more capable females were not entering education, but instead were choosing careers in other professions in the business world. This trend, coupled with attractive salaries for college graduates in the private sector (especially in science and math), kept young people away from the lock-step educational salary system. Staffing the Des Moines schools was a challenge, especially during the middle years of the decade. As the economy grew, jobs became plentiful in the private sector. Women college graduates, many of whom would

have chosen teaching a decade earlier, were especially lured toward these attractive positions. Teacher shortages were felt in many areas. However, because of a variety of flexible staffing patterns, certified people remained in all classrooms. Teacher retention, parttime and shared teachers, people teaching in their minor areas and the use of computers all combined to keep the schools operating.

5. School enrollments continued at the levels projected in 1981-82 (see Table 1). (A caveat should be added to this table. If tax credits or a voucher system were passed by some legislative body, this could dramatically alter public school enrollments. Most certainly, if people were given a financial alternative to public schools, more would choose private schools.) By the close of the decade, enrollments in special education classes were declining, while attendance in regular elementary classes was increasing. There were several possible causes for this phenomenon: better prenatal health information (especially the effects of drugs on the unborn), more abortions, the absence of major epidemics among pregnant mothers and a general increased awareness of the effects of good nutrition.
6. The creation of information and the refinement of knowledge continued at an even more rapid rate during the 1980s. Improvements were made in several areas, such as biofeedback, drugs and behaviors, brain studies, and health studies. With expanded research and so many different teaching and learning styles, considerable reevaluation was necessary for the schools to continue to serve as useful agencies of society.

7. The philosophy of the district continued to be to provide the best possible educational program for all students. However, in the "age of information" the nature of schooling, education, and learning changed. Early in the decade, both students and teachers received computer training. The staff employed their new knowledge to their own benefit, as well as to the district. Employees used the computer to save themselves time and the district money. Computers were soon doing numerous tasks for the district; e.g., scheduling bus routes, monitoring school security, heating and cooling, keeping daily student attendance, correcting tests, and keeping most teacher records, as well as assisting teachers with instruction.
8. A growing community proved to be a changing community. The schools had to change in order to stay relevant; steps taken were the improvement of vocational education programs, increased computer education and training, revised class requirements, and the introduction of more effective teaching methods. The economic and social parameters of Des Moines witnessed a transformation which gave the impetus for curriculum change.
9. A combination of factors buoyed public attitudes towards the Des Moines public schools. The trend toward higher standardized test scores, started in 1980-82, continued through the 1980s. By 1987 student scores averaged another 10 percentile ranks higher than they had in 1980-82. Another factor which contributed to a positive climate was the fact that the public envisioned the needs of a society facing an "information explosion." Patrons happily accepted the strong leadership schools provided to the students to aid them in dealing with this phenomenon. Educational retooling and updating

was met with popular approval from both the private and public sectors of the community.

10. Along with how education occurred came a change in who was educated. This included much more adult education, the result of an increased number of older citizens. Among the questions faced was the determination of the implications of contemporary developments in science, technology, and world societies for curriculum development and instructional practices.
11. In 1990, preparation of the students for the probability of a future far different from that of the twentieth century became a focus, when it was realized that in only ten years people would witness the arrival of the twenty-first century.

II. THE PESSIMISTIC VIEW

In January, 1981, few Americans envisioned the problems that beset the economy of the nation during the decade of the 1980s. The Carter administration had suffered a crushing defeat in November, 1980; the Congressional election results had followed the presidential path. The Reagan administration viewed inflation as the number one problem of the economy, while the Carter administration saw unemployment as its most critical challenge. Unfortunately, both were right. These two perplexing problems, coupled with continued high interest rates for consumers, the oil cartel influence on the world economy, and a lack of confidence in most American institutions--including government--triggered a period of international economic strife never before seen in the modern world.

Prior to this period, most economists were virtually certain that with safeguards like the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the strengthened Federal Reserve System, a monstrous economic depression would never again match the "Great Depression" of the 1930s. Older Americans remembered standing in bank lines with their parents in the 1930s. After a half century of prosperity they again found themselves facing the same grim picture.

"Third world" countries reached the limit of their borrowing and interest repaying power in the first half of the 1980s and found themselves subject to default if they encountered any extended period of retarded growth, the intrusion of protective tariffs, or falling prices for their goods. The poor cash flow position most domestic corporations had fallen to concurrent with the rising "third-world" debt placed them in a similar situation. The United States corporations, to settle their current debts, were dependent upon their collective abilities to sell existing inventories and collect their accounts receivable. At the same

time corporations attempted to create additional external funds through the issuance of bonds and stocks--at higher and higher interest rates.

Meanwhile, American consumers, quick to realize the lack of value of the dollar during rising inflation, were spending. While they did not buy stocks and bonds in great amounts (which had monetary value), or automobiles and appliances in large numbers, the savings rate dropped while the ratio of installment credit to disposable income held constant. Consumers put their dollars into real estate, which caused real property values to approximately double between 1975 and 1980. This, in turn, caused the Consumer Price Index to rise at a much faster rate than incomes. With larger and larger down payments on real estate being required, many consumers forced their personal finances into poor cash flow positions on the same order as corporations, in order to make real estate purchases. This made them extremely vulnerable during layoffs and other disruptions in regular income.

The American farmer found himself in a like position. Seed, fertilizer, capital machinery and land were caught in an upward spiral of inflation, while the prices for their products were not rising. Many farmers overextended their cash flow positions on the basis of "paper" land values; they were in as vulnerable a position as the corporations and consumers--or more so. Iowa farmers, faced with high "paper values" on land that had exceeded its productive capacity, were forced to struggle to remain solvent; land prices began to fall for the first time in several decades during 1982.

The economy struggled through the early 1980s without enthusiasm. The Reagan policies continued to hammer at high interest rates and inflation; some success was evident in mid-1983 when the annual rate of inflation finally fell to 6 percent. Concurrent with the falling

consumer price index was a rising rate of unemployment. By the beginning of 1984 the national unemployment rate had risen well above the 9 percent level of 1974-75.

Bankruptcy rose as the unemployed were no longer able to meet their payments on homes, automobiles, credit cards and loans. This was especially true in the area of real estate. When the incomes of home buyers were interrupted by layoffs and outright discharges, many were forced to give up their homes and forfeit equities.

The housing industry suddenly found itself with repossessed homes which further glutted the market. In the spring of 1984 many home builders and developers were forced to drastically lower prices in an attempt to recover at least a portion of their current debt structure. But the American consumer was unable to respond in great volume to the price reductions. With savings depleted, unemployment, continued high prices for necessities, and outstanding debts, it is little wonder that major investments in housing were not made by most consumers.

The Orwellian year of 1984 was still not through attacking the American economy. By late June it was obvious that the "breadbasket" of the world was not off to a good start. Delayed spring plantings due to heavier than normal precipitation were followed by weeks of the opposite extreme. The late-planted crops began failing at a time which in some cases precluded the possibility of replanting the same crop in sufficient time for it to fully mature. Many American farmers were heavily dependent upon loans and certain income from their crops in order to repay current debts. Even those who found themselves on a more solid financial footing were forced to strip their savings to meet seed, fertilizer and machinery debts, and other current costs of doing business. Rural banks extended themselves to their legal limitations to assist

their patrons through the difficult times and, in so doing, put themselves in financial jeopardy.

Most people agree that the crisis leading to the Depression of 1986-89 came in the summer of 1984. July and August were dryer than June; even the replanted crops failed to grow. Water shortages by midsummer forced a discontinuance of irrigation in the western states and drought conditions blanketed the entire nation. While only four to five percent of personal income in Iowa was derived directly from agriculture, the emotional impact of what was happening did not escape the consumer, who withdrew from normal consumption patterns even further. Nor did it escape the stock market, the housing market, the staggering automobile industry, or the worldwide economy.

By 1986 the world economy was in worse condition than that of the United States. Third world nations had defaulted enmass on their enormous debts, leaving even the OPEC nations in dire straits. It was impossible to trade oil for grain when there was neither new grain nor grain reserves. The year 1986 will be remembered by economists as similar in many ways with 1933, and at least as severe in its economic impact. Unemployment in the United States reached 25 percent. Industrial production fell 50 percent; the GNP was down 45 percent. Consumption spending was off 28 percent, while investments of all kinds collapsed. The money supply shrank about 27 percent and time deposits, when added to the money supply reductions, brought the total drop to 33 percent. Most nations of the world found things even more depressed.

In the 1985-89 period not all businesses had disintegrated, although most that were in poor financial positions in 1984 did not survive. By 1986 some of the stronger firms, who were more liquid and were able to

dispose of current inventories at reasonable prices, were able to discharge their obligations, weather the storm, and accrue some capital; through careful use of those dollars, they began to show a small profit margin. The process was not easy, but it was bolstered by the somewhat steadying political climate in 1988-89, and the supportive economic policies which Congress began to enact. A similar process began to appear in both the communist bloc and OPEC nations; the seeds of world trade were again cautiously planted. Agriculture was aided by a series of excellent crop years, the supportive economic policies, and the resurgent rebirth of farm cooperatives. But the revitalization of the economy was to be a long process. By 1990 the economy had reached a point similar to 1939 following the depression of the 1930's. It will take until the end of the millennium before the everlasting fear of depression is eased.

In the intervening years society became older, but perhaps wiser. The average age of people had advanced and in 1990 approximately 75 million Americans were 45 years of age or older--30 million were over 65. The concern for elderly citizens rose since there were more people in that segment of society than ever before in history.

Implications for Education

1. In 1990 the Des Moines Independent Community School District was still in existence, and had the responsibility for educating the children of the district; it endured the conditions experienced by all other sectors of the nation.
2. Public finance for education continued to be available. However, schools encountered a drastic period of financial reversals typical of educational financing during any depressed period. Growth, by 1990, struggled to reach one percent annually; fortunately, inflation likewise disappeared.
3. A variety of perceived educational needs and conflicting desires continued to arise from the diverse publics served by the Des Moines public schools. As in past periods of depression, the public tended to be philosophically supportive of public schools, they simply did not have the means to be fiscally supportive.
4. At the beginning of the 1980s schools entered a period of severe teacher shortages; however, with the onset of deep recession, and finally depression, people were more than happy to find employment at almost any level of pay. In addition, by 1990 the Social Security and teacher retirement age had been raised to 70. As a result, there was a plentiful supply of teachers available, although careful screening of the many applicants was required to insure that the highest quality staff were employed.
5. School enrollments continued at the levels projected in 1981-82 (see Table 1). However, the slackening of prenatal care due to the economy caused special education enrollment to rise above the levels projected.

6. The creation of information and the refinement of knowledge continued during the 1980s, albeit at a somewhat reduced rate due to the depression. Nonetheless, schools were faced with a problem of having more to teach than would fit the time available in the school day and year. Consideration was given to the prioritization of the most important learnings and the length of the school day and year.
7. The philosophy of the district continued to be to provide the best possible educational program for all students. However, in the period of depressed economy there was high concern for controlling program costs that were not targeted for "all" students.
8. During the 1980s, the district was forced to stay within the economic and social parameters established by the community.
9. Public attitude toward education, a problem during the "good times" of the sixties and seventies, improved with the coming of "hard times."
10. In 1990, preparation of the students for the probability of a future far different from that of the twentieth century became a focus, when it was realized that in only ten years people would witness the arrival of the twenty-first century.

III. THE STATIC VIEW

During the 1980's the status of public education was largely dependent upon the trends of the national economy and the mood of the nation. Since there were no dramatic changes in the national trends, America found itself in a state of stagflation at the onset of the 1990's. Essentially, the old ways of conducting business and operating the major industries prevailed during the 1980's, while revolutionary ideas were either quietly ignored or vehemently resisted. However, when faced with the alternatives of "sink or swim," a few new ideas were reluctantly interwoven into the technological fabric. These marginal concessions spared the nation from depression, but hindered the promise of prosperity.

Federalism prevailed while big government took a back seat in the engineering of social and educational matters. Capital formation and supply-side economics were the major fiscal concerns. Both the economic and political policies helped create a stagnate economic condition. Low supply and demand, a decline in savings, low returns on capital investments, and high unemployment rates all contributed to the stagnation of the economy during the Reagan years. The Federalism initiated by the Reagan administration continued despite changes in national party control. These were truly years of turbulence, as the nation struggled to recover from the economic setbacks of the decade.

Although the economy was depressed, Americans continued to nurture their materialistic habits. Consumers borrowed at greater levels. Creative financing became a commonplace practice. Home owners capitalized on the real value of their household equities which mushroomed during the high inflationary years. The gains made were readily recycled for major household purchases and other luxury items including recreation, travel, and college educations. Despite legislated savings incentives, most groups lost their savings power. For many, the repayment of debt

was the only form of savings that was exercised. This marginal consumption and savings inactivity caused the recession to continue and the economy to stagnate. As a result, inflation continued at about nine percent.

The United States remained dependent upon foreign oil. The notion of alternative energy resource development failed to graduate beyond being a favored dream of the futurists. Federal subsidies for alternative energy exploration expired by the mid 1980's. Small business and farm operators could not pursue their experiments single-handedly; the oil magnates felt no pressing need to continue their explorations alone. Solar heating, cooling, biomass, and agricultural heat were still being debated in the year 1990. A full-fledged energy alternative exploration effort might have moved the economy out of stagnation, but this thrust failed to materialize due to the lack of federal insight, the profit priorities of corporate America, and the apathy of John and Jane Q. Public. As a result, United States dependency upon foreign oil in 1990 reached 11.0 million barrels, an increase of 3.5 percent annual growth over the decade.

During the early 1980's federal legislation was created to grant tax relief to the business sector in hopes that those dollars would be invested in capital; new jobs would be created and productivity increased. The legislative intent failed because small businesses were not able to capitalize on the tax breaks and were thus unable to innovate, provide new jobs, and stimulate the economy. Similarly, many large corporations were fearful of placing their money in capital outlay when the economy appeared to be so tenuous.

Productivity was not greatly enhanced by automation and electronics. At the dawn of the 21st Century, the United States continued to operate

within traditional and rather obsolete work modes. In the major industries, jobs were still being performed by humans with only marginal use of computers, technology and robotics. This failure to upgrade continued to shackle workers to mundane tasks, consuming time which might have been used for more complicated, productive and rewarding work.

The influx of the baby boomers into the job market and the decline of the work ethic greatly influenced employment, unemployment and ultimately the gross national product. The "Big Generation," being reared by the permissive word of Dr. Spock, lived out its attitude of individuality and indifference, and assumed little responsibility in contributing to the productivity of the nation. The lack of pride in work continued to depress the American spirit of craftsmanship.

During this same period, economic and political refugees entered the country at a record annual average of 487,000. Because they were willing to work for less pay and under poorer working conditions, many American workers who held higher work-related expectations found themselves unemployed. Neither the garment nor service industries could employ all of the legal and illegal workers who were entering the country. Intense employment competition occurred throughout the entire labor force.

Jobs continued to be scarce; there was little promise that the situation would improve. The high rate of unemployment spurred the move toward job sharing through increased parttime work schedules, sabbatical option programs, reduced work hours per employee, apprenticeship-mentor programs, and retirement alternatives. Political and business leaders continued to assist in devising and implementing these job sharing plans. The idea of full employment was still an impossible vision of the future, just as it was in the sixties.

Overall, there was only limited sensitivity for the quality of American life. Americans continued to be self-centered and remained unwilling to make major personal sacrifices. They were busying themselves with single-issue politics and voting only for candidates who shared their views. Of major concern were the accumulation of wealth, the reduction of personal income taxes and the deregulation of big business.

The labor market suffered due to American unwillingness to change. Fulledged development of micro-electronics was a notion of the future, although Japanese industries were already largely operated by robotic machines capable of evaluating the quality of work, formulating decisions, and correcting errors. Americans entered the last decade of the century kicking, screaming and fighting hard to keep micro-electronics from reshaping the ways in which they worked, played and communicated. As a result of American reluctance to change, economic recovery was still "just around the corner."

Implications for Education

1. In 1990, the Des Moines Independent Community School District was still in existence, and had the responsibility for educating the children of the district; it endured the conditions experienced by all other sectors of the nation.
2. Public finance for education continued to be available in some form; however, public schools did not receive a marked increase in public financial support. With inflation at nine percent, and allowable budget growth at five percent, the school budget had to be reduced to absorb the four percent annual shortfall. The schools in 1990-91 had approximately 30 percent fewer real dollars than in 1980-81.
3. A variety of perceived educational needs and conflicting desires continued to arise from the diverse publics served by the Des Moines Independent Community School District. Due to cutbacks in program options, the district lost a number of students to the various private schools within the community. Despite budget restrictions, the district continued to offer a reasonable number of educational alternatives in order to carry out its mission and survive.
4. Teacher shortages in both general and specific areas existed as more able professionals, as well as science and mathematics specialists, opted for employment in the private sector, especially in the booming areas of micro-electronics and information processing.
5. Because the impact of enrollment increases in private schools were not calculated into the 1981-82 projection, school enrollments declined slightly from the projected levels (shown in Table 1).
6. The creation of information, and the refinement of knowledge continued, causing redefinitions in both the purpose of schools and

the nature of schooling. Limited consideration was given to instructional priorities and time on task allowances.

7. The philosophy of the district continued to be to provide the best possible educational program for all students but with 30 percent fewer real dollars available, program and staff reductions were inevitable.
8. The district remained within the economic and social parameters established by the community.
9. In 1990, preparation of the students for the possibility of a future different from that of the twentieth century became a focus, when it was realized that in only ten years people would witness the arrival of the twenty-first century.

SUPPORTIVE TABLE

Table i

Ten-Year Projection by Groups

	<u>K-5</u>	<u>K-6</u>	<u>6-8</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>9-12</u>	<u>K-12</u>	<u>Special Ed. and Special Schools</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Annual Change</u>
77-78	15,357	18,838	7,907	5,436	11,597	35,871	1,313	37,184	-1,799
78-79	15,765	18,132	7,489	5,122	11,060	34,314	1,191	35,505	-1,697
79-80	15,097	17,490	7,245	4,852	10,282	32,624	1,419	34,043	-1,462
80-81	14,523	17,079	7,419	4,863	9,958	31,900	1,261	33,161	- 882
81-82	13,924	16,420	7,408	4,912	9,502	30,834	*1,617	32,451	- 710
82-83	13,630	16,030	7,430	5,030	9,100	30,210	1,550	31,760	- 691
83-84	13,460	15,610	7,070	4,920	9,060	29,590	1,500	31,090	- 670
84-85	13,540	15,530	6,560	4,570	9,080	29,180	1,450	30,630	- 460
85-86	13,880	15,750	6,020	4,150	9,040	28,940	1,400	30,340	- 290
86-87	14,110	16,090	5,850	3,870	8,800	28,760	1,400	30,160	- 180
87-88	14,460	16,360	5,760	3,860	8,230	28,450	1,400	29,850	- 310
88-89	14,680	16,760	5,990	3,900	7,670	28,330	1,400	29,730	- 120
89-90	15,050	16,340	5,980	4,010	7,320	28,170	1,400	29,570	- 160
90-91	15,370	17,420	6,120	4,070	7,130	28,620	1,400	30,020	+ 450
91-92	15,620	17,790	6,210	4,040	7,240	29,070	1,400	30,470	+ 450

* Includes special program people not previously counted.

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ORACLE

Working Paper

Please read your scenario and the educational implications very carefully prior to beginning this exercise. When you have studied it keep it handy for reference as you follow the steps in the exercise.

You may agree or disagree with all or part of the scenario you have just read; however, the purpose of the scenario was to "set the stage" for obtaining input from the reader regarding directions the Des Moines Public Schools might take under those conditions. In this light, the scenario becomes a "What if?" proposal and the reader should not deviate from or amend the conditions and events expressed therein. While some of the events may not seem desirable, or even plausible, to you, please look upon them as history. There are other scenarios in this series with which you may agree or disagree even more strongly.

Attempt to place yourself in the year 1990 and in the mental state which might accompany the "historic" conditions put forth in the scenario. This is very important. Given certain economic and social conditions, people tend to think differently when presented with the same thoughts and problems than they would under a different set of conditions. Remember, you will be attempting to visualize what your personal feelings would be at that time (1990) and under those conditions.

Given the experiences and conditions found in the scenario and their implications for education:

1. what should be the primary purposes of education? (List three)

a.

b.

c.

2. what areas should be emphasized in the curriculum? (List three)

a.

b.

c.

3. what areas should be of less importance in the curriculum? (List three)

a.

b.

c.

4. how should the district attempt to solve any problems of teacher supply and demand? (List up to three problems you foresee and the strategies you would use to combat them.)

a.

b.

c.

5. what should be the requirements for graduation from high school?
(List all requirements.)

6. what should the district do relative to: (List no more than two suggestions under each category.)

a. pre-school and kindergarten education?

(1)

(2)

b. vocational education?

(1)

(2)

c. talented and gifted education?

(1)

(2)

d. special education (learning disabled, retarded, handicapped, etc.)?

(1)

(2)

e. community/adult education?

(1)

(2)

f. establishing achievement standards?

(1)

(2)

g. remedial programs?

(1)

(2)

h. testing?

(1)

(2)

i. school discipline?

(1)

(2)

j. school attendance?

(1)

(2)

k. homework?

(1)

(2)

l. promotion policies?

(1)

(2)

m. class size?

(1)

(2)

n. summer school?

(1)

(2)

7. from what sources should the district obtain funding for programs and staffing needs? (List sources, e.g., state income tax, local property tax, etc.), and the percent of the total district income that should come from each source.)

8. how should the district house its educational programs, services, warehouses and central administration? What guiding principles should it follow relative to school-owned buildings?

9. should the district take any action to shorten/lengthen the school day? The school year? What action would you recommend?

10. should the district make provisions for: (If yes, list no more than two suggestions under each category.)

a. the use of technology to help educate?

(1)

(2)

b. computer literacy?

(1)

(2)

c. values education?

(1)

(2)

d. teaching students how to cope with change?

(1)

(2)

e. the study of the future?

(1)

(2)

f. home study? (Students obtaining at least part of their education at home--with some types of communication devices as needed.)

(1)

(2)

11. What other suggestions do you have, given the conditions expressed in the scenario?